Introduction

Students arrive at school in the dark from outlying farms and from the freshly plowed streets of town. Still groggy, they stumble into the public high school, nodding at friends and unloading backpacks. Snowflakes sparkle in the first rays of sunshine as they cover the small mid-western town. It's February and the cruelness of the mid-west winter is rivaled only to the warmth of receiving a much desired valentine from a crush. And so, cold winter winds blow outside the frosted school windows while, inside the classroom, students talk about love, *Hard Love*.

The unit encourages students to write about and discuss in depth the prominent themes in *Hard Love*, including how dysfunctional families affect the members involved, the difficulties of relationships, and the cathartic release of writing. Discussion and sharing writing is not an issue as the class shares a strong emotional bond and feels safe to discuss many personal topics in the welcoming classroom environment.

In addition to teacher led modeling of reading strategies, class discussion, partner discussion, mini grammar units, and short writing assignments, students perform a WebQuest, researching information about zines and e-zines. This research prepares them for their final assessment which is the production of their own personal zine or e-zine.